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POLITICS AND POLICY

LaRouche Group, Long on the Political Fringe, Gets Mainstream Scrutiny After Illinois Primary

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Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
WASHINGTON—"The British Crown is in fact the head of the drug lobby."

The International Monetary Fund "is engaged in mass murder on a larger scale than the Nazis" because it created the AIDS epidemic. A conspiracy to take over the world is led by Zionists, the KGB, the British Intelligence Service and "cults," including Yale University's Skull and Bones Society.

That is the world according to Lyndon LaRouche, two of whose followers stunned the Democratic Party in Illinois last week by winning the primary nominations for lieutenant governor and secretary of state. The question is whether their high-profile victory will backfire as people scrutinize Mr. LaRouche's extreme views and his well-financed group, called the National Democratic Policy Committee.



Lyndon LaRouche

Mr. LaRouche is a one-time Marxist who more recently has allied himself with the ultra-right. His group, formerly known as the National Caucus of Labor Committees and the U.S. Labor Party, has a history of harassing public figures and is currently under investigation by federal and state officials for credit-card fraud and other activities. His young, generally well-educated supporters see him as a Plato-like figure who alone can save the world from financial collapse and nuclear war. And Mr. LaRouche, who has run for president three times, says he plans to run again in 1988.

Surprisingly Good Connections

The 63-year-old, former self-employed computer operator, has surprisingly good connections. Portraying himself as a consultant with a private intelligence network, he met in 1981 with then Mexican President Jose Lopez Portillo, and in 1983 with the late Indian leader Indira Gandhi to discuss the world monetary system. He also has won the ear of some Reagan administration officials.

Mr. LaRouche met with "people in the White House, the CIA, Interior Secretary James Watt" until publicity about the meetings caused officials to back off, says Norman Bailey, the former chief econo-

mist for the National Security Council and now a private consultant. "A White House person asked me to meet with them (Mr. LaRouche and his associates)," says Mr. Bailey, who adds that he found Mr. LaRouche's information to be valuable even though he disagreed with his tactics and theories.

The LaRouche group claims to raise enough money for a \$30 million annual budget, but some of its financial activities are questioned by law-enforcement authorities. Federal and state prosecutors say solicitations by LaRouche followers have been used improperly to help Mr. LaRouche obtain nearly \$1 million in federal matching funds for his presidential campaigns.

For years, his well-dressed young followers have collared passers-by at airports with catchy signs such as "Feed Jane Fonda to the Whales," signing up backers for their pro-nuclear, pro-"Star Wars," anti-drugs, anti-AIDS and other campaigns. Without mentioning their LaRouche affiliation, they ask people to subscribe to official-sounding publications like the "Executive Intelligence Review," and "Fusion" magazine, or to join groups.

Credit-Card Charges

Federal officials say hundreds of purchasers have been overcharged on their credit cards and others unwittingly have ended up as political contributors to Mr. LaRouche. U.S. Attorney William Weld, in a recent Massachusetts court filing, says a continuing federal investigation "indicates an extensive nationwide pattern of the unauthorized use of credit card numbers by LaRouche-related entities and individuals."

The Federal Election Commission recently extracted a \$54,000 repayment and \$15,000 penalty against the LaRouche organization after accusing it of "willfully and knowingly" submitting "false and misleading" information in order to receive federal matching funds in 1980. For example, the commission described how a man named Harold Harper bought \$40 of publications and, unbeknownst to him, the money was listed as his political contribution eligible for federal matching funds.

Janice Hart, the LaRouche follower who was the successful Democratic nominee for Illinois secretary of state, and her husband, Robert, appeared to have signed money orders that were improperly represented as being eligible for federal matching funds, the elections panel said. In a 1982 deposition, the Harts denied buying the money orders and said they "could not

recall" making the contributions. They weren't charged with any violation.

Mr. LaRouche, who operates out of a heavily fortified estate in Leesburg, Va., denies all charges of wrongdoing. While he has aligned himself more with the ultra-right in recent years, he retains the conspiracy theories previously promoted by his former Marxist groups, which were known for harassing public officials and unions and for physical violence in some disputes.

There haven't been any violent clashes between LaRouche followers and other groups in recent years, but there have been some harassment incidents. When Henry Kissinger and his wife were walking through Newark airport in 1982, on his way to heart surgery, LaRouche follower Ellen Kaplan shouted to him, "Do you sleep with young boys at the Carlyle Hotel?" Mrs. Kissinger grabbed her by the lapel, prompting Ms. Kaplan to file assault charges that later were dropped.

More recently, one reporter critical of LaRouche encountered leaflets inviting neighbors to a "gay coming-out party" at his house; another found leaflets detailing her purported prostitution ring. New Hampshire reporter Jon Prestage discovered a dead cat on his doorstep each successive day his LaRouche stories appeared in the Manchester Union Leader.

In a trial last year in which Mr. LaRouche tried to sue NBC for defamation after it aired two reports on him, he was instead ordered to pay \$202,000 in damages to the network. NBC charged in federal court in Alexandria, Va., that LaRouche followers made repeated threats and posed as NBC and Senate aides to falsely cancel an NBC interview with New York Sen. Daniel Moynihan. In that case, Mr. LaRouche testified that he hasn't had any income for the past 12 years or filed any income-tax returns. Judge James Cacheris concluded that Mr. LaRouche was "completely lacking in credibility" and that "he lives like a millionaire."

Member Was 'Brainwashed'

Former members of his group claim in affidavits filed in the Alexandria court that Mr. LaRouche runs a totalitarian cult that "controlled every aspect of your life" by cutting off outside friends and family. "I do feel that I was brainwashed," testified one former member, who said that even though the group has ties to the right-to-life movement, members were encouraged to have abortions because "you can't have children during a revolution." In testimony, LaRouche followers denied the former members' charges.